New BICC publication: “Towards a Typology of wartime rape”

BICC brief 43 “Towards a Typology of wartime rape” (http://www.bicc.de/publications/briefs/brief-43.html) aims at developing a typology of wartime rape as a first step toward understanding the different consequences of this form of violence in war. This typology is based on the examination of wartime rape in Bosnia and Herzegovina and El Salvador as well as on a review of the literature on ten additional country cases of wartime rape (Cambodia, Colombia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia, Nepal, Papua New Guinea/Bougainville, Peru, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Timor Leste). BICC brief 43 is the result of a research project, which was funded by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).

The systematic and widespread perpetration of rape in the wars in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) and Rwanda have led to the description of rape as a ‘weapon of war’, which has led in turn to international condemnation and the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1820 (June 2008) to prevent its use as a method of warfare. “However, the reality is that there are many uses of and motivations for wartime rape, many ways in which rape is perpetrated by members of armed groups and many different characteristics of these armed groups,” Elvan Isikozlu, BICC researcher and one of the study’s authors, underlines.

BICC brief 43 begins by reviewing the scholarly literature on rape and war, asking for explanations of this phenomenon, its meaning and functions and the factors that contribute to it. It presents a review of wartime rape in Bosnia and Herzegovina and El Salvador, referring to them as the founding cases for the Typology. The study also analyzes the literature on additional country cases, which helped to refine the Typology, in Africa (Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone), Asia (Cambodia, Nepal), Latin America (Colombia, Peru) and Oceania (Papua New Guinea/Bougainville, Timor Leste). The brief presents eight different types of wartime rape against civilians, e.g. rape as a military strategy, rape camps, rape by an ally, sexual slavery, etc. Finally, BICC brief 43 presents some of the consequences that can be linked to the different types of this crime.
“Our examination of the consequences of wartime rape focuses on socio-economic issues and how these affect not only the raped individual, but also his/ her family, community and the interactions within and between them,” Elvan Isikozlu explains.

While it remains a work in progress, the typology presented in BICC brief 43 can be used by donors and practitioners to help identify the necessary data to design more informed and targeted interventions, and to evaluate interventions that aim to meet the needs of individuals, families and communities that result from wartime rape. “Our typology could, after further development, also be used to develop operational tools and strategies to protect vulnerable populations from victimization, and to deter the orchestration and/or perpetration of wartime rape in the future,” Peter J. Croll, Director of BICC, concludes.